

D R A F T

RSO  
Argentina

TO: HA - Steve Palmer  
IO - Mr. Michael Newlin

FROM: INR -

SUBJECT: Request for Assessment of Human Rights  
Situation in Argentina

As requested in your memorandum of February 6,  
attached is an analysis of the current human rights  
situation in Argentina for use in making decisions on  
US policy vis-a-vis Argentina-related items at the  
UNHRC.



The human rights situation in Argentina has continued to improve over previous years, but serious problems remain. In addition, Argentina's activities in support of the Bolivian coup and the issue of accounting for past disappeareds remain serious human rights concerns.

There have been no credible reports of disappearances since last September. (For all of 1980 there were unconfirmed reports of 28 disappearances of which 12 cases

occurred under circumstances which lend credibility to charges of official involvement.) <sup>GOA authorities, in fact, presently admit to such treatment of Montenegro who was apprehended returning clandestinely to Argentina.</sup> There has been no movement by the Argentine authorities toward addressing the sensitive issue of accounting for past disappeareds.

The most carefully documented list of unexplained disappearances contain about 5,600 cases for the period 1976-79. Argentina has refused to cooperate with the UN Working Group on disappeareds and is expected to continue to raise a procedural smokescreen at the UNHRC meeting in Geneva in an effort to block further Working Group inquiries.

The number of prisoners held on other than common criminal charges totalled about 1,550 <sup>of which</sup> and 550 are being held without trial and/or charges. During 1980, eight persons were arrested under the state of siege provision. The Right of Option program, which allows qualified prisoners to choose self-exile in lieu of detention, has been greatly restricted (by Argentine Government regulations.)

The opportunities for the exercise of political freedoms remain circumscribed by the prohibition on political activities and de facto limits on the freedom of expression. Politicians and the press have increasingly voiced criticism of government policies, but the limits of acceptable criterion are <sup>not defined</sup> (uncertain) and critics are occasionally harrassed or detained on the grounds that they have overstepped the limits of the law.

The steady improvement in Argentine human rights performance <sup>reflects</sup> (has been the result of the government's own <sup>efforts</sup> ~~to address the conditions which have brought about~~ initiatives toward bettering the human rights situation; and its increasing awareness of) international concern, over ~~Argentina's human rights image.~~

Argentina, which has experienced difficulties in its relations with the US during the last four years -- foresees improvements under President Reagan. Last November's Republican victory was greeted with thinly veiled elation.

Argentine expectations are based on:

-- a perception of Republican administrations as strongly anti-communist and, therefore, unlikely to victimize Argentina's anti-communist military governments thorough application of what they believe has been a double standard in human rights matters;

-- inferences drawn from campaign statements and comments of self-proclaimed "spokesmen" for the Republican Party and President Reagan who have visited Argentina in the last six months;

-- the perception of Secretary Haig as a no-nonsense, security-oriented fellow military professional who is better attuned to understand the problems of the area's military governments than a civilian; the Secretary's statements concerning the importance of combatting terrorism have buttressed this impression; and

-- the power of self-deception, i.e., the ability of military leaders to convince themselves that certain changes are likely because those changes would serve their interests.

Essential to this process of self-deception is the conviction that the attitudes and policies of the Carter administration were primarily responsible for troubled bilateral relations. Acrimony over human rights issues, for example, is often attributed not to past or continuing abuses but to:

-- the failure of the US to understand Latin American "reality";

-- the alleged moralistic, anti-military bias of US policy; or

-- the actions of "dangerously leftist" US officials in the executive and legislative branches.

The consequences of this mind set is the belief that improved relations must begin with changes in the attitudes and policies of Washington rather than in those of Argentina.

Notwithstanding significant economic ties between the USSR and Argentina, the armed forces leaders are committed anti-communists, sometimes to the point of obsession with the perceived threat to their countries and the rest of Latin America. They are undoubtedly convinced that a US administration able and willing to appreciate that threat will also develop an enhanced appreciation of the political, economic, and strategic value of having allies among Southern Cone nations.

Southern Cone leaders including those in Argentina, expect no dramatic US initiatives with respect to their region. They are aware that Latin America traditionally is not high on a new US administration's list of foreign policy priorities. They would tend to greet the announcement of a sweeping new policy for Latin America with a cynicism born of long experience with such promises. Under current conditions, they expect US attention and resources devoted to Latin America will be focused primarily on Central America and the Caribbean. They understand and will

applaud this priority because Argentine military leaders believe that US policy toward Central America has been misguided in not responding aggressively to Cuban infiltration. Finally, the more sophisticated regional leaders realize that specific policy objectives of the new administration with respect to Argentina will be delayed to some degree by the need to coordinate policy within the US government and particularly with the Congress.

What Southern Cone governments and especially Argentina, do expect is a change in US attitudes that will create an atmosphere more conducive to friendly relations and the resolution, or at least discussion, of outstanding problems. Specifically, they anticipate an end to what they perceive as the negative atmosphere of the Carter years during which they believe that they were kept on the defensive, subjected to invidious comparisons with the Hemisphere's democracies, and forced to endure the consequences of a double standard in the implementation of US human rights policy.

In their view, the desired shift in US attitudes should involve:

- elimination of the "anti-military bias" in US policy;

-- better understanding of the subversive threat faced by Southern Cone governments; and consequently, -- a lower US profile in human rights matters, acknowledgement of the region's importance to US and Western Hemisphere security, and acceptance of the claims that the Southern Cone countries are willing friends and allies of the US.

Specific US measures that Argentina would welcome as harbingers of better relations include the abrogation of the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment (Section 620b of the FAA, 1977) that cut off US arms and training on October 1, 1978, and a less restrictive US policy on the transfer of nuclear materials and technology.

While the general expectation is for improved bilateral relations, in Argentina's case, domestic politics militates against a suddenly more cooperative relationship. General (retired) Roberto Viola will assume the presidency on March 29. His supporting cast includes generals and admirals whose basic "anti-Yankee" sentiments have intensified over the past four years. Although personally inclined toward cordial bilateral relations, Viola cannot move so far or so rapidly as to provoke the animosity of his anti-US cohorts.

Argentina's policy regarding Bolivia has been a major deterrent toward improved US-Argentine relations. Since the July 17, 1980 coup that ushered in the Garcia Meza regime, various kinds of Argentine assistance have helped keep the Bolivian military in power. (Aid levels, however, have fallen short of Bolivian expectations and, particularly in the economic area, been a source of disappointment and political embarrassment for La Paz.)

Economic aid has consisted primarily of food, supplier credits, and loans. In all cases except for food donations, the terms have been more commercial than concessionary. As of late October, two separate loan packages had been negotiated, each totaling \$125 million. The first \$125 million package consists of:

- \$15 million to rollover previous debt;
- \$60 million disbursed to the Central Bank of Bolivia on September 30 and reportedly intended to turn a net reserves deficit of \$48 million into a surplus in order to impress IMF officials. Some sources have reported that the Bolivians agreed not to spend these "cosmetic" funds, but, with or without Argentine approval, they were reportedly shifted to pay current expenses. In early December, a DAO La Paz source (apparently an Argentine military officer)

disparagingly alleged that Argentina could account for only 18 out of \$50 million that had been loaned to Bolivia. He may have been referring somewhat inaccurately to the \$60 million loan to the Central Bank; and

-- \$50 million to aid ongoing development projects, particularly in cases where Bolivia was in need of matching funds to keep projects going.

We know little of the second \$125 million package except that the funds are to be tied to development projects and not used for such current expenditures as debt repayment and salaries.

With respect to military assistance, we know of no major Bolivian purchases nor Argentine grants since the soup. Just before July 17, shipments of Argentine ammunition and small arms reportedly arrived in Bolivia.

Assistance in the form of military training and the provision of advisors is undoubtedly continuing, although we have little recent information on how many Argentines are in Bolivia or what they are doing. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Argentine State Intelligence Service (SIDE) has provided training in intelligence matters.

[REDACTED] SIDE officers reportedly instructed [REDACTED] Bolivians [REDACTED]

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[redacted]  
[redacted] in intelligence and interrogation techniques. Re-  
portedly included in the curriculum were the more  
nefarious interrogation techniques [redacted]

[redacted] Similar instruction had previously  
been given [redacted]  
[redacted]

Clearly the Argentines have not extended themselves  
in supporting the Garcia Meza government. They have done  
and will do what they believe necessary to keep the  
military in power in Bolivia, but the generals in Buenos  
Aires are not enthralled with Garcia Meza and his supporting  
cast. The Argentines see little need to place themselves  
in such an obvious and public patron relationship that  
they would have to absorb an even greater share of the  
international criticism that has been showered on the  
Garcia Meza regime. It is doubtful, in fact, that  
Argentina would do much to prevent the ouster of the  
Garcia Meza crowd, and it might prove somewhat more  
generous with a successor military government that was  
more capable of gaining acceptance at home and abroad.  
Ultimately, however, Argentine largesse will be curbed by:

-- Argentina's primary objective in Bolivia which  
is order rather than economic development; and

-- Argentine wariness about overexposure in a country that Argentines consider inherently unstable and populated by an inferior Indian people.

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SUBJECT:    Request ~~for~~ Assessment of Human Rights  
                 Situation in Argentina

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attached is an <sup>*summary (a)*</sup> analysis of the current human rights  
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~~US-policy-vis-a-vis-Argentina-related-items-at-the~~  
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*(b) Argentina's support of  
the Bolivian regime and (c) what the  
Southern Cone Governments expect of the  
new U.S. Administration. This assessment  
should be considered in conjunction with  
the 1980 Country Report on Human Rights  
Practices in Argentina.*

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to improve over previous years, but serious problems *continue.*

There have been no credible reports of disappearances since last September. For all of 1980 there were unconfirmed reports of 28 disappearances of which 12 cases occurred under circumstances which lend <sup>†</sup> credibility to charges of official involvement. There has been no movement by the Argentine authorities toward addressing the sensitive issue of accounting for past disappeareds.

1976-79. Argentina has refused to cooperate with the <sup>HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS</sup> ~~Working Group on Disappeareds~~ <sup>It has achieved a major</sup> ~~and is expected to~~ continue to raise a procedural smokescreen at the UNHRC meeting in Geneva in an effort to block further Working Group inquiries.

The Right of Option program, which allows qualified prisoners to choose self-exile in lieu of detention, has been greatly restricted by Argentine Government regulations.

(Sentence with specifics needed: 8 B)

[illegible]

C Argentina is among 15 countries under investigation by the UN Human Rights Commission's Working Group on Disappearances. However, Argentina has ~~cooperated~~ not fully cooperated with the Wb and ~~has~~ <sup>is merely</sup> refused to respond to the Wb's written requests for information about specific individuals. During two appearances before the Wb, both of which were private sessions, Argentine Ambassador Martinez reiterated his refusal to supply any information on these individuals without a commitment by the group to treat it under the 1503 procedure. ~~Without the~~ <sup>On</sup> ~~the~~ intention of the Wb has been achieved with Argentina's cooperation, it remains to be seen how cooperative

country that has

The GOA will ~~be~~<sup>be</sup> over the  
next year.

1. Description of Present Argentine Government;

*A* The military took control of ~~the state~~ <sup>Argentina</sup> in 1976. Maintaining the state of siege imposed in 1974 by President Maria Estela Peron, the armed forces closed Congress, deposed the President, and replaced all members of the Supreme Court. Most elements of the democratic process remained legally suspended. The government has declared its intention to return the nation to constitutional democracy but it has not established a timetable for realizing that goal.. The military has designated General Viola to serve until March 1984 as President.

2. Bolivia-Argentina: The January 17, 1980 military coup which interrupted the return to democracy was supported by the Argentine military and has continued to receive economic, diplomatic and military support. The Garcia Meza regime is qualitatively different from any in recent Bolivian history in its level of brutality, venality and unpopularity. Unlike other authoritarian regimes in South America, the Garcia Meza regime has no coherent economic plan, no political program other than anti-Marxist rhetoric and non-visible objective other than to maintain itself in power and enrich itself in drug trafficking to the United States.